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DE RUEHEK #1478/01 3461350
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0454
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2358
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0780
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2764
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2146
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 001478

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ ELECTIONS: CHARGES OF INTIMIDATION AND
BIAS

REF: A. BISHKEK 1441

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 1424

[1](#)C. BISHKEK 1419

[1](#)D. BISHKEK 1402

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Classified By: Pol-Econ Chief Robert Burgess, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: With the vote scheduled for December 16, accusations of the misuse of administrative resources, intimidation of government opponents, and continued controversy over the 0.5% regional threshold dominate the last days of the campaign. Government employees have been pressured to join the pro-presidential Ak Jol party, and government ministers have turned official events into de facto Ak Jol rallies. State television has been heavily pro-Ak Jol in its coverage, and the required free air time for all parties has been limited to the 11:00 pm time slot. Court cases have been filed against the Social Democratic Party, as well as against the Coalition of NGOs, which plans to field a large number of domestic election observers. Everyone believes that the results will be manipulated, and there is speculation that deals are being cut to get 3 or 4 parties into parliament. In a sign that everything may not be going according to plan, the administration is reportedly now considering cancelling (via a court decision) the 0.5% regional threshold that, if it stands, would make it difficult for more than one or two parties to get into parliament. END SUMMARY.

Administrative Resources for Ak Jol

[1](#)2. (C) Opposition parties have complained about the heavy-handed use of administrative resources in favor of the pro-presidential Ak Jol party. Parties accused the Central Election Commission (CEC) of bias for refusing to register seven parties because of alleged technical faults with their

candidate lists. In one case, the CEC disqualified the largely ethnic-Uzbek Rodina party because the CEC's background check did not confirm the Kyrgyz citizenship of 16 candidates on the list; all 16 have Kyrgyz passports, and included a former governor of Naryn oblast, an ex-member of parliament, and a former GKNB colonel.

¶3. (C) Throughout the three-week campaign period which began November 26 (Ref D), government ministers have traveled to the regions, turning official events and openings into de facto Ak Jol rallies, particularly in Talas and Naryn oblasts. There are also credible reports that government employees, including teachers and health care workers, have been pressured to join the Ak Jol party, and that others have been threatened with losing their jobs if they did not campaign for Ak Jol.

State Media for Ak Jol

¶4. (C) The coverage of the election on state television (KTR) has been heavily slanted in favor of Ak Jol. The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission's media monitoring of television news shows that 80% of election-related coverage on KTR has focused on the president, the ministers, local officials and Ak Jol. Ata Meken has received 4% of election related coverage, but 75% of that was negative. There have been continued complaints that KTR (as well as some private channels) have refused to sell advertising time to opposition parties during prime time hours.

¶5. (C) Kyrgyz election law requires that state media provide free air time in equal shares to all parties participating in the election. KTR and the CEC have taken a narrow interpretation of this requirement, giving 6 hours on television and 6 hours on radio, running simultaneously from

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11:00 pm to midnight for six days starting on December 4. OSCE/ODIHR estimated that each party ended up with approximately 25 minutes to get out its message. The CEC has also blocked party debates on television, claiming that having international organizations such as NDI or OSCE sponsor a program would constitute foreign support to political parties. (Note: The law in question contains an exception for educational purposes, all parties would participate, and KTR said it did not have "resources" to sponsor the shows itself. End note.)

¶6. (C) While KTR is the only Kyrgyz television network with nationwide coverage, the government has also apparently put pressure on some smaller, private channels. NGO leader Tolekan Ismailova charged December 10 that the government was attempting to close particular private channels, by ordering that Mezon-TV in Osh increase its amount of Kyrgyz-language programming and requiring that the "September" television station (affiliated with Ata Meken leader Omurbek Tekebayev) move its antennas.

Intimidation through the Courts

¶7. (C) As a fallout from the ballot scandal (Ref A), the Prosecutor General, at the urging of the CEC, brought suit against the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) for the costs of reprinting all ballots, approximately \$580,000. On December 11, a Bishkek court ruled that the SDPK was liable, and it ordered the party's bank accounts frozen. The SDPK is appealing the rulings.

¶8. (C) On December 10, two pro-governmental NGOs filed a lawsuit against the Coalition of NGOs, charging that Coalition-published voter education brochures contained false information. The suit sought to have the Coalition's activities suspended and bank accounts frozen; the Coalition plans to field the largest team of domestic observers. At

the court hearing December 11, a CEC representative and attorney worked with the two NGOs to try to build the case against the Coalition; when it became clear that nothing that the Coalition was alleged to have done violated any law or regulation, the judge gave the NGOs time to re-draft their complaint. Late in the day, the judge ordered the Coalition to apologize publicly and cease distribution of the remaining information materials.

Other Kinds of Intimidation

¶9. (C) Opposition parties have complained of harassment and physical attacks on their members, particularly in the regions. Jenishbek Nazaraliyev, lead candidate for the Asaba party, announced December 12 that he was withdrawing his candidacy and calling for a boycott of the elections. He had earlier complained to us that his party's election chief for the Issyk-Kul oblast had been badly beaten, and that the party had faced other harassment, including the destruction of billboards and other property. (Note: Asaba party officials said that the party would continue to compete in the elections. End Note.) The Ata Meken party has also claimed that several of its regional electoral offices have suffered break-ins, threats against workers, and harassment from officials.

A Negative Preliminary Assessment

¶10. (C) Ambassador met December 11 with OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission head Nikolai Vulchanov, who presented a fairly negative assessment of the process so far. On the plus side, posters and signs for all parties were generally allowed, and the CEC allows observers and the press at its

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plenary sessions. But he also listed a number of problems. He said that the performance of the electoral administration was the worst he had ever seen. Included in the list of problems were the CEC's failure to register several parties (including Rodina); the handling of the ballot scandal matter (he said that the CEC had violated its rules and authorities in taking Edil Baisalov off the ballot); and going after the Social Democrats for the cost of reprinting ballots. Another big concern is the Shailoo computer system. With this system, voters can check their registration on line, and the system can also report results from each polling station almost immediately. The system functioned for the 2005 elections, but the CEC told Vulchanov that it was "not possible this time" to use the system to report polling station results.

Changing the Threshold?

¶11. (C) The 0.5% regional threshold, which would require a party to get at least 13,500 votes in each of the seven oblasts and in the cities of Bishkek and Osh, continues to be a point of controversy. There are signs, however, that the administration may cancel this requirement. The Ak Jol party has submitted an appeal to an earlier court decision upholding the threshold, and on December 10 Presidential Chief of Staff Sadyrkulov told Vulchanov that they were "still thinking" about the threshold requirement. Political commentator Valentin Bogatyrov, who is close to the administration, said in an interview published December 12 that it was possible that the court would cancel the threshold. Maintaining the threshold, he reasoned, could result in a one-party parliament, which would be "catastrophic."

Comment

¶12. (C) Everyone believes that the results will be

manipulated. There are visible signs of the pressure being exerted for Ak Jol, and we have heard reports of pressure from candidates on the lower half of the Ak Jol list for an Ak Jol sweep. However, we are also hearing speculation that deals are being cut to get 3 or 4 parties into parliament, but getting so many parties into parliament will be difficult if the 0.5% threshold remains. We expect more surprises in the final days before the December 16 vote.

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